

4.

P O E M S

B Y

J. DONALDSON,
K

A U T H O R O F

THE ELEMENTS OF BEAUTY.

E D I N B U R G H.

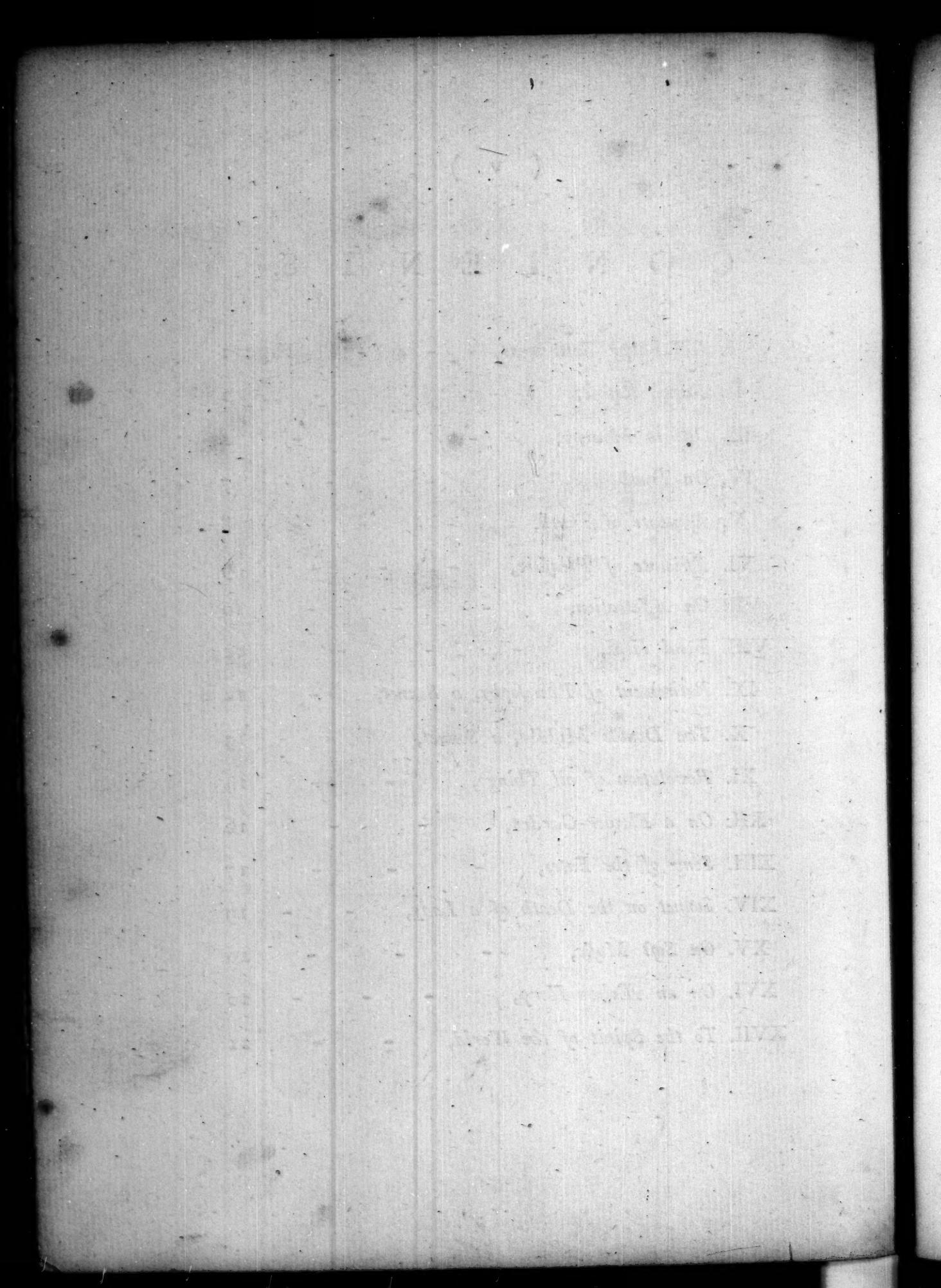
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P O E M S.

I.

ON HAPPY RETIREMENT.

SOME wise men rise to public view,
Some folly all forego :
So Scythians shoot when they pursue,
Or when they shun the foe.

Statesmen and warriors, the first—
While those that court the Muse,
And calm Philosophy, more thirst
For peaceful life recluse.

The lark that highest sings and flies,
The lowest builds her nest,
And she that warbles to the skies,
In valleys seeks for rest.

Consid'ring life with reason due,
 Good taste prefers a mean ;
 And, but for the discerning few,
 Would wish to live unseen.

II.

R U R A L R E P O S E.

NOW day declines and all is still,
 Save herds that homeward hie ;
 The fun-beam fades on yonder hill,
 Soft as a farewell sigh.

 Blest mind that no rude tempest knows,
 But mov'd with joy serene,
 Sinks smiling into calm repose,
 Like ev'ning's gentle scene !

 But mortals turbulent and vain
 Know nought of tranquil joy ;
 Oft seeking to inflict a pain,
 Oft they themselves annoy.

False

False hopes, false cares, fly high, fly low,

To flatter or affright ;

These trimm'd in fair and specious shew,

Those like foul hags of night.

Lo ! where ambition seeks to found

True pleasure on a name ;

Like taper-fly, still circling round

The giddy torch of fame.

There thunder mighty heroes, braves,

Usurping sov'reign sway ;

The nation's kings, tho' nature's slaves,

Vain tyrants of a day.

While here sweet peace, with head reclin'd

Upon her downy wing,

Eyes with a smile the cottage hind,

Or hears him blythly sing !

III.

O D E T O M O D E S T Y.

TUNE the lute and tune the lyre,
 These can life and love inspire.
 While the Muses touch the string,
 Mirth shall bashful merit bring :
 Modesty is joy concealing ;
 Impudence is want of feeling.

COME Modesty, first-bidden guest,
 Who of thyself would'st come the last ;
 Kind Love shall veil thee from the eyes
 And insolence of ruder spies ;
 And Taste, fair Virtue's child, entwine
 A garland for thy brows divine.
 Happy he whose wishes find
 Modest' worth and love combin'd !

Tune

Tune the lute and tune the lyre,
These can life and love inspire.

In all things, Modesty, with thee
Good taste and temperance agree :
True beauty knows no boastful glare,
To make the superficial stare ;
Fond love, Endymion like in sight,
Prefers the moon's chaste modest light ;
To ruffian war loud sounds belong,
Thou lov'st the soft Sicilian song.
Tune the lute and tune the lyre,
These can life and love inspire.

Not in rude bulk fair Beauty's Queen
Moves Goddes of a graceful mien ;
But in due figure, unconfin'd,
Denoting elegance of mind :
But fools still hold an idle state,
And for the good admire the great :

Thus .

Thus oft ill actions gain acclaim,
While modest worth is mark'd with blame.
Tune the lute and tune the lyre,
These can life and love inspire.

Nor in vain greatness, nor the voice
Of many thou conceiv'st thy choice :
The foolish are a num'rous crew ;
The wise, that worth esteem, are few.
From Mercury, Love, ever young,
First learn'd fair fluency of tongue,
But from Diana chaste to wing
The shaft, and from the muse to sing ;
The gentle muse that shuns the croud,
Ever violent, ever loud.

HAPPY he whose wishes find
Modest worth and love combin'd !
Tune the lute and tune the lyre,
These can life and love inspire.

IV.

O N T R U T H.

TRUTH boasts no supernat'ral light,
 Yet smiles at Fable's moral flight,
 And skilful in the rapt'rous art,
 Herself can sometimes bear a part.
 Daughter of reason pure, and love !
 Ador'd by all who pleasure prove,
 Thy mild yet energetic ray,
 Like Hesperus at close of day,
 Not dazzles with excess of light,
 But charms while it directs the sight.
 Thou lov'st the unfrequented way,
 Where genius and fair science stray.

V.

ESTIMATE OF TRUTH.

HE truth alone can rightly prize
 Who is himself maturely wise.
 To sottish drunkards those appear
 Like fots, who keep their senses clear ;
 And those of coolest foundest brain,
 Are mark'd by madmen for infane.
 In superstitution's sickly dream,
 Foul stains pollute the clearest stream ;
 The modest voice of better sense,
 To snarling fools gives harsh offence :
 As much enrag'd the wild boar rears
 His bristles when he music hears.
 'Mongst Gods a Goddess Genius fits,
 A silent slave 'mongst meaner wits.

VI:



VI.

ESTIMATE OF PLEASURE.

PLEASURES moving human mind,
 Are of mix'd uncertain kind ;
 Sometimes much on fate depends,
 Sometimes fancy marrs or mends.
 Treach'ry, dress'd like Truth, prepares
 For the feeling heart her snares ;
 Folly, wearing Friendship's guise,
 Lends her ears to Slander's lies.
 What is merit's great reward,
 Save a cold or rough regard ?
 What does life itself imply,
 Since all things that live must die ?

B. VII.

VII.

ON AFFECTATION.

Poor Affectation! how much better be
 That which we seem, than idly thus, like thee,
 To seem what we are not? Thy cheating art
 Robs ev'n its owner of the better part;
 For when thou striv'st to please, 'tis all in vain,
 And pain'd thyself, thou giv'st to others pain.
 Twin-child of Treachery with deadly Guile,
 Disguis'd like thee in gesture, look, and smile.
 Slight ape of gracefulness, without the grace,
 That mock'st the sympathies of human race.
 Lover and friend without love or esteem;
 Nothing to be, but all things fair to seem:
 Endimpled so, the whirlpool hides death's frown,
 As smiling on him whom it seeks to drown!

VIII.

VIII.

F O N D H O P E.

WHAT rapture would the Muse again inspire,
 What dear delusive hope, what fond desire?
 Would she describe the chearful beams of morn,
 Or sadder sweets that ev'ning scenes adorn?
 Would she the charms of sacred beauty sing,
 Or ecstasies that heav'nly knowledge bring?
 What are the joys which nature yields or art,
 Unless those joys we freely might impart?
 But, O sad thought! a heart supremely kind
 Seems but a vision of the love-sick mind,
 The longing of a soul whose hopes pursue
 A counter-part that still eludes her view:
 So rare is truth, affection's taste so rare,
 And bent on vanity, most worldly care!

IX.

RETIREMENT OF PHILOSOPHY.

A SONNET.

AS little springs that force their liquid way
 From bottom of the ever-raging flood,
 Beat off rude waves, and rising into day,
 To thirsty sailors prove a sov'reign good :
 So, fair Philosophy, thy deep-drawn streams
 Pervade ev'n rankest tides of error foul,
 Dispel the rage of superstitious dreams,
 Imparting tranquil pleasure to the soul !
 Soft-pinion'd Peace attends thy simple state,
 Retires with thee to bow'r or rocky cell ;
 The Sciences, thy handmaids, ready wait,
 With thee, alone, bright Truth delights to dwell :
 While all afar prevails the horrid rout
 Which Scylla and Charybdis herds about.

X.

X.

THE DOUBLE MISTAKE.

A SONNET. *

'T IS better to be good, tho' ill esteem'd,
 And have the light, tho' others lack the skill
 To know what should or good or bad be deem'd,
 Or take for good what reason takes for ill.
 Must I cry lame because the cripple halt,
 Or feign me blind because the lame wou'd lead ?
 Must I be senseless held for others fault,
 Or hold me dumb because the deaf not heed ?
 Yet true it is, too cheaply have I sold
 That which to me has ever been most dear,
 And better had to better hearts been told,
 Than turn'd to falsehood in a foolish ear :
 To some too freely would I truth have shewn,
 Their fraud unknowing, I to them unknown.

XI.

* See a Poem of SHAKESPEAR, intitled *Error in Opinion*.

XI.

REVOLUTION OF ALL THINGS.

THE gentle primrose leads the train
 Of vernal flow'rs that grace the plain ;
 The daisy and the vi'let lead
 The summer-blooms that scent the mead ;
 The last of winter's hardy train
 Lead on the laughing spring again,
 Nor first nor last we clearly trace
 In the bright perennial race.
 All, all, in endless circles run
 To the point where they begun.
 The planets whirl, the sun about,
 Nor tell us where they first set out ;
 All living things new shoots supply,
 And only in the old ones die.

Mortals

Mortals quickly, too, advance,
 In the never-ceasing dance ;
 Men ever in their offspring live,
 And as they get still freely give ;
 Like the swift night-racing band,
 Who bear the torch from hand to hand,
 Giving life and labour o'er
 To the youths who run before. *

All, all, in endless circles run
 To the point where they begun,
 Nor first nor last we clearly trace
 In the bright perennial race.

XII.

* The simile in the above, alludes to an Athenian exercise of racing, in which one person ran with a torch, and delivered it over to the next in succession.

XII.

ON A FLOWER-GARDEN.

SPARE, O spare each smiling flow'r,
 Offspring of a fleeting hour ;
 Let them live their little day,
 Man is transient too as they ;
 Man who seeks with giddy joy,
 First to rear and then destroy.
 Let them wanton in the wind,
 Let them live to leave their kind,
 Still in brightest beauty seen
 In their native couches green :
 So shall they fresh odours bring,
 Wafting sweets on Zephyr's wing.

XIII.

XIII.

SONG OF THE FATES*.

IN garments white, with crowns of gold,
 Prefide the Sister Fates that hold
 Their seats on high, the world above,
 Beneath the throne of thund'ring Jove.
 Amid the Sirens in a ring,
 Alternate thus they spin and sing :
 ‘ Souls of a day,
 ‘ Away, away !
 ‘ Another crop of mortal race,
 ‘ This quickly gone, shall come in place.
 ‘ Turn the whirl, the spindle turn,
 ‘ Mortals laugh and mortals mourn !
 ‘ HAPPY those who life employ
 ‘ In social sense and genial joy,

C

‘ Far

* See, in PLATO'S REPUBLIC, the Story of *Erus Armenus*.

' Far from horrid haunts of war,
 ' From rapine and injustice far.
 ' Turn the whirl, the spindle turn,
 ' Mortals laugh and mortals mourn !

' LET wretches tremble at their fate,
 ' Who truth regard with ranc'rous hate,
 ' For Jove hath linked with their crimes,
 ' The dire events of future times.
 ' Turn the whirl, the spindle turn,
 ' Mortals laugh and mortals mourn !

THE Siren-chorus join the song,
 And in full harmony prolong,
 ' Souls of a day,
 ' Away, away !
 ' Another crop of mortal race,
 ' This quickly gone, shall come in place.
 ' Turn the whirl, the spindle turn,
 ' Mortals laugh and mortals mourn !

XIV.

SONNET
ON THE DEATH OF A LADY.

NOW western clouds appear of golden hue,
 Inlac'd with purple streaks of living light ;
 And distant hills look dusky azure blue,
 Involv'd within the glimm'ring shades of night.
 Woods, hamlets, plains, with sadness are o'ercast ;
 Sol's parting rays play on the dimpling main,
 Amid the murmurs of the wint'ry blast,
 Like joyful spirits dancing in his train.
 The trees have lost their silken green attire,
 To foreign climes the herald-swallow flies,
 All silent drooping sit the tuneful quire,
 Or welcome new-born day in happier skies :
 These in their season soon shall glad return,
 But she no more, alas ! for whom I mourn.

XV.

XV.

ON SOFT MUSIC.

SOFT music still affords relief
 To gentle souls far gone in grief ;
 Not such unmitigated woe
 As only duller mortals know,
 Whose vi'lent sorrow may no longer last,
 Than morning dew, or april show'r is past ;
 But that much deeper mourning of the heart,
 In which the sacred Sisters bear a part,
 Like love sincere, unchangeable remains,
 And inly soothes while yet the soul it pains !

XVI.

ON AN ÆOLIAN HARP.

SWEET instrument, whose wild notes can allay
 The violence of passion's ruder sway !

Thou

Thou by thy charming influence canst bring
 Music from winds, and teach them how to sing :
 O soothe a tender lover's soul to rest,
 And calm the tempest in his troubl'd breast !

XVII.

TO THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD.

O THOU, eternal HARMONY of things,
 The rest and motion, labour and repose
 Of all by turns in their revolving course !
 Thou force cohesive and dissolvent pow'r ;
 Relation, REASON, infinite, immense !
 With humble reverence and silent awe,
 Let me thy light contemplate and thy love !
 Thou shinest in the di'mond, and the dew
 Of fragrant morn ; thou in the lilly shin'st,
 And in the vernal rose ; the higher orbs,
 The sun great source of light, the moon serene,
 And all the starry host shine forth in thee !

But, ah, how far surpassing these shine forth
 The light of reason and the social sense,
 The sense of truth, the sympathy of love ! O
 These in the wise are seen ; the wise in thee
 Do live, thou livest in the wife. In these
 Then let me worship thee ; not in dull rites,
 In speculative dreams and mysteries ;
 Not in mouth-praises which the vain affect,
 But nature's pure simplicity and grace,
 In actions noble, just, beneficent.
 So shall I live, love of thy love, in thee,
 Who art the boundless ALL of LIFE and LOVE !



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